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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Office of  
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# Selected Speeches and News Releases

August 29 - September 4, 1991

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# Statements

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

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by Secretary of Agriculture, Edward Madigan, on the Report by the U.S. General Accounting Office on “Revitalizing the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Structure, Systems, and Strategies”, Sept. 3.

After six months on the job, I believe many of the criticisms of the GAO report are justified, but all are not. We will be working hard to correct the things that need to be corrected and to improve the services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I believe the Department is doing a good job of helping America’s farmers. We will continue our efforts to bring economic growth to rural America.

I also believe the Department is doing a good job of helping to assure a reasonably priced food supply for consumers. There are food safety concerns under review. However, our food supply currently remains the safest in the world.

We believe farmers and the agricultural community have a need to protect the environment. We will continue to develop and promote new ways of ensuring this protection.

During the winter months we will be working with GAO on improvements at USDA that will enable this Department to maintain its leadership role.

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by Secretary of Agriculture, Edward Madigan, Sept. 3.

The President Monday called upon the U.S. Department of Agriculture to begin some immediate assessments of the agricultural and humanitarian needs of the people of the Soviet Union and the Republics.

Agriculture Under Secretary Dick Crowder will be going to the Soviet Union, probably Sept. 9-15. He will lead a team of experts to review in detail with Soviet and Republic officials their likely food requirements for the coming winter. Under Secretary Crowder will travel to areas most likely to face food shortages in his effort to assess food problems.



Later this month, at the President's request, I will lead a U.S. delegation to the Soviet Union, accompanied by a number of technical experts who work in government and the private sector.

Based on information provided by Undersecretary Crowder, we expect to get into specifics in two primary areas of concern:

- First to address the food needs for the people of the Soviet Union and the Republics during the coming winter.
- Second to continue the process, which began in May, of providing the Soviet people with technical assistance and advice for improving their distribution and handling of agricultural commodities.

Undersecretary Crowder and I will report our findings and recommendations to President Bush. The President will share these with the G-7 and other allies who will be involved in future efforts to assist the Soviet Union and the Republics.

We began the long-term process of improving the Soviet food distribution problems in May. Recent events dictate that our efforts be accelerated.

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# News Releases

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## USDA ISSUES RULES AFFECTING SOYBEAN ASSESSMENTS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 29—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is issuing an interim final rule which establishes regulations for the collection of assessments under the Soybean Promotion and Research Order. Assessment collections will begin Sept. 1.

In a separate but related action, USDA will amend the soybean order to modify procedures affecting soybeans pledged as collateral for Commodity Credit Corporation loans.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service said the soybean assessment rule identifies 29 Qualified State Soybean Boards certified by the United Soybean Board to collect assessments of 1/2 of 1 percent of net market value of soybeans marketed domestically.

Funds from the assessments will be used to develop a program designed to strengthen the position of soybeans in the marketplace.

Soybean purchasers must collect the assessments from producers and remit them to their appropriate board. In states without soybean boards, purchasers will remit assessments to the United Soybean Board, P.O. Box 954591, St. Louis, Mo. 63195.

The rule also specifies which soybean sales are not subject to assessment.

Haley said the related procedural amendment will save time and money by eliminating the need for CCC to collect assessments from the proceeds of a loan as currently required by the soybean order.

However, if a producer forfeits soybeans in lieu of loan repayment, CCC would bill the producer for assessments due and notify a qualified state soybean board or the United Soybean Board, Haley said.

USDA will conduct a referendum on whether producers favor a continuation of the program, within 18-36 months from the original July 9 issuance of the order. Prior to the announcement of the referendum's outcome, producers may obtain full refunds of assessments paid to the national program.

Both actions will be published as interim final rules in the Aug. 30

Federal Register. Comments should be sent in duplicate by Sept. 30 to Ralph L. Tapp, Chief, Marketing Programs Branch, Livestock and Seed Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2624-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Copies of the actions and additional information on the soybean program are available from that office.

Rebecca Unkenholz (202) 447-8998

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USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR JULY

WASHINGTON, Aug. 29—Here is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for July 1991:

Cost of food at home for a week in July 1991

	-----Food plans-----			
	(In Dollars)			
	Thrifty	Low-cost	Moderate cost	Liberal
Families:				
Family of 2				
(20-50 years)	49.30	61.80	76.20	94.60
Family of 2				
(51 years and over)	46.80	59.60	73.30	87.60
Family of 4 with				
preschool children	71.80	89.20	108.90	133.60
Family of 4 with elemen-				
tary schoolchildren	82.20	104.70	130.80	157.50
Individuals in				
four-person families:				
Children:				
1-2 years	13.00	15.80	18.40	22.20
3-5 years	14.00	17.20	21.20	25.40
6-8 years	17.10	22.70	28.40	33.10
9-11 years	20.30	25.80	33.10	38.40



Females:

12-19 years	21.30	25.30	30.60	36.90
20-50 years	21.30	26.30	31.90	40.80
51 and over	21.10	25.70	31.60	37.70

Males:

12-14 years	21.10	29.20	36.40	42.70
15-19 years	21.90	30.20	37.50	43.50
20-50 years	23.50	29.90	37.40	45.20
51 and over	21.40	28.50	35.00	41.90

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food at home for four food plans—thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal.

Sue Ann Ritchko, HNIS administrator, said the plans consist of foods that provide well-balanced meals and snacks for a week.

In computing the costs, USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods and other nonfood items bought at the store.

“USDA costs are only guides to spending,” Ritchko said. “Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes, and how much food is prepared at home.”

“Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable,” she said. “The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families who have tighter budgets. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan.”

To use the chart to estimate your family's food costs:

—For members eating all meals at home—or carried from home—use the amounts shown in the chart.

—For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent for each meal eaten away from home from the amount shown for the appropriate family member. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

—For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart pertain to individuals in fourperson families. If your family has more or less than four, total the “individual” figures and make these adjustments (note: larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones:

- For a one-person family, add 20 percent.
- For a two-person family, add 10 percent.
- For a three-person family, add 5 percent.
- For a five- or six-person family, subtract 5 percent.
- For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

Details of the four family food plans are available from the Nutrition Education Division, HNIS, USDA, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Johna Pierce (301) 436-8617

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES UPLAND COTTON USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATE**

WASHINGTON, Aug. 29—The upland cotton user marketing certificate payment rate for Aug. 30 through Sept. 5 is 1.16 cents per pound according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, requires that if, for any consecutive 4-week period, the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (U.S. Northern Europe price) exceeds the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the five lowest-priced growths, as quoted for Middling 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (Northern Europe price) by more than 1.25 cents per pound, marketing certificates must be issued to domestic users and exporters on documented sales made in the week following such consecutive 4-week period. The certificate payment rate is based on the difference in the fourth week between the U.S. Northern Europe price minus 1.25 cents, and the Northern Europe price.

Based on data for the Friday through Thursday period ending Aug. 29 the U.S. Northern Europe price exceeded the Northern Europe price by more than 1.25 cents per pound for the fourth consecutive week.

Relevant data for the 4-week period are summarized below.

Week	For the Friday through Thursday Period Ending	U.S. Northern Europe Price (1)	Northern Europe Price (2)	(1) Minus (2)	Certificate Payment Rate <sup>1</sup>
		..... cents per pound .....			
1	Aug. 8, 1991	78.45	74.96	3.49	
2	Aug. 15, 1991	74.85	72.91	1.94	
3	Aug. 22, 1991	74.20	72.17	2.03	
4	Aug. 29, 1991	74.19	71.78	2.41	1.16

<sup>1</sup>(1) minus (2) for Week 4 minus 1.25 cents.

The certificate value will equal the quantity of eligible upland cotton consumed by domestic users or sold for export by eligible exporters during the period beginning 12:01 a.m. Friday, Aug. 30 and ending midnight Thursday, Sept. 5, multiplied by the payment rate of 1.16 cents per pound. In order to receive marketing certificates, eligible domestic users must have consumed such cotton and must also submit documentation to CCC proving the cotton was consumed during this time. Eligible exporters will receive their marketing certificates after CCC receives documentation verifying that the cotton was exported pursuant to a written contract entered into during this time.

Domestic users and exporters who wish to participate in the program must sign an Upland Cotton Domestic User/Exporter Agreement (CCC-1045). Agreements can be obtained from the Cotton Branch, Cotton and Rice Division, ASCS Kansas City Commodity Office, (816) 926-6662.

In the future, the user marketing certificate payment rate will be announced in each Thursday's announcement of the prevailing world market price for upland cotton.

Charles Cunningham (202) 447-7954

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**USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE  
FOR UPLAND COTTON**

Washington, Aug. 29—Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality) and the coarse count adjustment in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Aug. 30, through midnight Thursday, Sept. 5.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the adjusted world price (AWP) may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (U.S. Northern Europe price) exceeds the Northern Europe price. The maximum allowable adjustment is the difference between the U.S. Northern Europe price and the Northern Europe price.

Based on data for the week ending Aug. 29, a further adjustment to this week’s calculated AWP may be made in accordance with this provision. The calculated AWP is 109.02 percent of the 1991 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the U.S. Northern Europe price exceeds the Northern Europe price by 2.41 cents per pound. Below are the relevant calculations.

I.	Calculated AWP .....	55.35 cents per pound
	1991 Base Loan Rate .....	50.77 cents per pound
	AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate .....	109.02
II.	U.S. Northern Europe Price .....	74.19 cents per pound
	Northern Europe Price .....	-71.78 cents per pound
	Maximum Adjustment Allowed .....	2.41 cents per pound

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant data, a further adjustment to this week’s calculated AWP equal to 1.64 cents per pound will be made.

Based on data for the week ending Aug. 29, the AWP for base quality upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:



Adjusted World Price	
Northern Europe Price .....	71.78
Adjustments:	
Average U.S. spot market location .....	14.18
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton .....	1.90
Average U.S. location .....	0.35
Sum of Adjustments .....	<u>-16.43</u>
Calculated AWP .....	-55.35
Further AWP adjustment .....	<u>- 1.64</u>
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE .....	53.71 cents/lb.
Coarse Count Adjustment	
Northern Europe Price .....	71.78
Northern Europe Coarse Count Price .....	<u>-70.00</u>
	1.78
Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton .....	<u>-4.20</u>
	-2.42
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT .....	0 cents/lb.

Since the AWP is above the 1989, 1990 and 1991 crop base quality loan rates of 50.00, 50.27 and 50.77 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rates for the 1989, 1990 and 1991 crops of upland cotton during this period are equal to the respective loan rates, adjusted for the specific quality and location, plus any applicable interest and charges.

The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates. Because the AWP in effect is above the established loan rate, loan deficiency payments are not available for 1991-crop upland cotton during this period.

The next AWP and coarse count adjustment announcement will be made on Thursday, Sept. 5.

Charles Cunningham (202) 447-7954

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## **NEW EEP BARLEY MALT ALLOCATION TO CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES PRE-ANNOUNCED**

WASHINGTON, Aug.29—Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard T. Crowder today announced that effective Oct. 1, 20,000 metric tons of barley malt will be available under the Central American barley malt initiative of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Export Enhancement Program.

Seven countries are now included in this EEP initiative: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

Under the EEP, sales of barley malt will be made to buyers in these countries through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices. The export sales will be facilitated through the payment of bonuses in the form of commodities from the inventory of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation. The subsidy will enable U.S. exporters to compete at commercial prices in the market of each of the countries.

The current allocation expires on Oct. 1. An invitation for offers with the new allocation will be issued on that date to assure continuity of this initiative.

For more information call Paul Cummins or Don Street, (202) 382-9240.

Lynn Goldsbrough (202) 447-3448

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## **WHEAT PRODUCERS IN 89 ILLINOIS COUNTIES ELIGIBLE FOR USDA EMERGENCY LOANS**

CHICAGO, Aug. 30—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today named 89 Illinois counties where wheat producers are eligible for U.S. Department of Agriculture emergency loans because of damage to wheat crops from excessive rainfall, heat and humidity between April 1 and June 30.

“Wheat growers in these hardest-hit counties will be able to apply for low-interest emergency loans to help cover part of their losses,” Madigan said. “We are taking this step to help farmers who have suffered at least a 30-percent crop loss, and who are unable to get credit elsewhere, get through this difficult time.”

Other requirements for eligibility are a producer's ability to repay

USDA emergency loans and any other loans, and possession of adequate security and multi-peril crop insurance, if available.

The following 50 counties are eligible for the emergency loans because they are the primary counties where adverse weather conditions significantly impacted wheat production: Alexander, Bond, Boone, Brown, Bureau, Calhoun, Cass, Clark, Crawford, Douglas, Edwards, Effingham, Fulton, Gallatin, Greene, Hamilton, Hardin, Henry, Jefferson, Jersey, Johnson, Lake, Lawrence, Lee, McDonough, Macoupin, Marion, Marshall, Massac, Montgomery, Morgan, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Putnam, Randolph, Richland, Rock Island, St. Clair, Saline, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby, Stark, Tazewell, Union, Wabash, Washington, Wayne and White counties.

The following 39 counties also are eligible under the rules of the emergency loan program because they are contiguous to one or more of the primary counties: Adams, Champaign, Christian, Clay, Clinton, Coles, Cook, Cumberland, DeKalb, Edgar, Fayette, Franklin, Hancock, Henderson, Jackson, Jasper, Knox, La Salle, Logan, McHenry, McLean, Macon, Madison, Mason, Menard, Mercer, Monroe, Moultrie, Ogle, Peoria, Piatt, Pike, Sangamon, Vermilion, Warren, Whiteside, Williamson, Winnebago, Woodford.

Wheat producers in all 89 counties have eight months to apply for the loans to help cover part of their actual losses.

Joe O'Neill (202) 447-4323

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## **USDA SCIENTISTS PATENT TWO WAYS TO INHIBIT FRUIT AND VEGETABLE BROWNING**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 3—Two methods for extending the shelflife of raw fruits, vegetables, and juices have been patented by two U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists.

The first method is a time-release system that keeps raw fruits and vegetables from turning brown. For example, sliced apples in laboratory tests did not brown for two weeks after being treated under this system and kept at 40 degrees F, said co-inventor Kevin B. Hicks of USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

He said that when fruit or vegetable skin is pierced, oxygen speeds up a natural chemical breakdown in cells that causes browning. However,



this time-release system uses compounds called “ascorbic acid esters” to protect those cut surfaces and inhibit the browning process.

The second method relies on similar browning inhibitors called “cyclodextrins” that use a “molecular shield” to protect fruit and vegetable juices from the browning process. As an example, Hicks said apple juice mixed with cyclodextrins and stored at 39 degrees F resisted browning for more than two months.

He said both patented techniques make use of natural browning inhibitors in liquid form to lengthen shelflife. They can serve as replacements for Food and Drug Administration-banned sulfites.

While a number of sulfite substitutes were developed following the 1986 FDA ban, those substitutes have limited effectiveness in ensuring extended protection against browning, he said.

“But now we think we’ve developed some unique and better alternatives to sulfites for preventing browning,” said Hicks, a research chemist at the ARS Eastern Regional Research Center in Philadelphia. “This is also important because the FDA is considering new regulations banning the sulfiting of some fresh potato products.”

Browning occurs when fruits and vegetables are peeled, sliced, diced, crushed, or mechanically injured during harvest. The fruit and vegetable industry estimates that the browning problem has a multi-million dollar-impact on processed fruit and vegetable products such as pre-peeled potatoes and salad bar items.

Hicks and Gerald Sapers, fellow ARS research chemist and co-inventor of the time-release system, discovered the inhibiting action in ascorbic acid esters in studies at the Philadelphia center’s Plant Science Research Unit. These esters are made by combining two currently used browning inhibitors—ascorbic acid and phosphates—into what the scientists described as “a unique molecular compound.”

Hicks said the fused compounds are more effective than ascorbic acid and phosphates added individually to cut produce. He said produce can be sprayed or dipped, in supplying time-release protection.

On the patented process for juices, he said cyclodextrins act as a key ingredient in inhibiting browning. Cyclodextrins are prepared from corn starch and are used in many countries for other food and pharmaceutical applications.

“Ascorbic acid esters and cyclodextrins must be approved by the FDA,” Hicks said. “Several companies have expressed interest in obtaining regulatory approval.”



Such companies may apply to ARS for a license to use each patent.

Bruce Kinzel (301) 344-2739

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## **CCC INTEREST RATE FOR SEPTEMBER LOWERED TO 6 PERCENT**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 3—Commodity loans disbursed in September by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 6 percent interest rate, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the CCC.

The 6 percent interest rate is down from August's 6-3/8 percent and reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in September.

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789

#

## **BREAKING THE SALMONELLA CONNECTION**

WASHINGTON—Salmonella enteritidis may not make it as the guest villain on a television mystery series, but it has many of the qualifications. It's a hateful culprit that can make its victims miserable. It preys especially hard on the young, elderly and infirm. Tracking it can lead investigators through a maze of clues. And dedicated detectives have MG singled it out for elimination.

Known generally as Salmonella, this species of bacteria can contaminate a number of foods. These foods can then poison people, causing fever, nausea, vomiting, cramps and diarrhea. Symptoms begin 12-36 hours after eating and usually run their course without serious aftereffects. In some cases, however, the poisoning can be fatal.

Apprehending Salmonella that have contaminated fresh eggs requires an involved investigation because many things can happen to an egg from the time a hen produces it until a consumer eats it.

Looking for that critical Salmonella link in fresh eggs is the job of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and especially the Salmonella Task Force, part of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Since the task force was formed last year to eliminate contamination on

farms where shell eggs are produced, it has conducted “tracebacks” on 29 cases of Salmonella food poisoning associated with eggs.

“Grade A shell eggs have been implicated in some recent cases of Salmonella poisoning,” says Dr. John Mason, director of the Salmonella Task Force.

“When I say implicated, I mean they probably were contaminated. But other factors were involved. In practically every case in which we conducted a trace-back, food was improperly refrigerated or poorly cooked, allowing the Salmonella bacteria to multiply to large numbers,” Mason explains.

These trace-backs uncovered 15 contaminated egg-producing operations—9 in Pennsylvania, three in Indiana, and one each in Maryland, Delaware and Michigan. To remain in production, the farms involved have to send their eggs to processing plants, where the eggs are broken and pasteurized.

“In a literal sense, we’re breaking the Salmonella connection,” Mason says with a hint of a smile. “More than 600 million eggs from these contaminated premises have been broken and kept off the fresh-egg market.”

To determine whether a farm is contaminated, APHIS veterinarians take environmental samples by swabbing manure pits and egg-handling equipment. If the swabs test positive, the chickens are also tested. In each house, the veterinarians collect blood samples from 300 live chickens and take organ samples, including the ovary and oviduct, from 60 chickens sacrificed for the purpose.

“Just a few suspect farms have generated a mountain of test work because today’s commercial egg production involves huge operations,” Mason says. “A million laying hens may be kept on a farm, housed in buildings with 70,000 birds each. As a result, we have to collect thousands of samples per farm, especially since some houses need to be sampled more than once.

“In our first 12 months of operation, we amassed 2,293 environmental swabs from chicken houses and 6,681 composite tissue samples from chickens,” Mason says. “We isolated Salmonella enteritidis from 469 environmental swabs and 154 tissue samples. That amount of analysis represents a big challenge for our laboratory scientists.”

The challenge is met by the general bacteriology section of the APHIS National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, which provides diagnostic support for several APHIS animal health activities.



“We’re receiving a steady flow of test samples from the task force,” says Dr. Lee Ann Thomas, who heads the section. “Samples come separately bagged and labeled, grouped by the poultry house from which they were taken. They are packed in styrofoam containers with ice packs to preserve the bacteria.”

Testing of tissue samples begins by homogenizing them to free the bacteria. That takes just 90 seconds using a hammer-like machine called a stomacher. Macerated tissue samples as well as environmental swabs are placed into an enrichment broth and incubated for 24 hours.

“Then we’re ready to begin identifying the bacteria in each sample,” Thomas says. “First, we place a small amount of the enrichment broth on plates containing a selective agar, a growing medium that is selective in the sense that it favors the growth of Salmonella organisms and inhibits the growth of other types of bacteria,” Thomas says.

The plates are placed in incubation chambers. After 24 hours, lab workers can recognize colonies of Salmonella-like organisms on sight. The lab workers achieve more specific identification by putting these colonies into test tubes containing other media. A specific change in color is the clue that Salmonella are present. Bacterial typing, which nails down whether Salmonella enteritidis is involved, is done in another section of the APHIS laboratories.

The results are sent back to Mason at the task force. It’s his responsibility to break the bad news to the egg producer whose chickens test positive to Salmonella enteritidis.

“I can’t tell the producer to what extent eggs are contaminated,” Mason explains. “So far, we have only determined that chickens are infected and we take action on that basis. I’d guess that in a typical positive flock, perhaps one egg in 10,000 contains Salmonella enteritidis.

“However, I suspect there are individual cases where the level of contaminated eggs is considerably higher. We’re currently doing a survey of eggs from known infected flocks to get an idea of the extent to which eggs are actually contaminated,” Mason said.

The news that eggs may no longer be marketed as table eggs inflicts a heavy economic blow, but the task force helps the producer eliminate the problem and get back into the table-egg market as quickly as possible.

Mason recommends that the producer get rid of the infected chickens and subject chicken houses and equipment to a thorough cleanup and disinfection. All of the 15 farms involved are going through this procedure.

In addition, the task force has notified both egg producers and consumers to be on guard against Salmonella enteritidis. The combination of increased awareness of the Salmonella problem and diversion of potentially infected eggs seems to have produced the desired result. Instances of Salmonella poisoning reported so far this year are about one-third the number reported by this time last year. As a result, fewer people have to undergo the agonies that result from Salmonella poisoning.

Amichai Heppner (301) 436-5222

Issued: Sept. 3, 1991

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## **U.S. INDUSTRY BUYS 511 MILLION POUNDS OF FLUE-CURED TOBACCO DURING 1990 MARKETING SEASON**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4—U.S. cigarette manufacturers purchased 510.6 million pounds of farm sales weight flue-cured tobacco from July 1, 1990 through June 30, 1991 (excluding pre-1985 loan stocks).

The manufacturers' purchase intentions for the 1990 crop were 491.5 million pounds. Actual purchases were 103.9 percent of intended purchases.

The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 requires each major domestic cigarette manufacturer to purchase at least 90 percent of their intentions to avoid the assessment of a penalty.

Robert Tarczy (202) 447-8839

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## **THE EYES HAVE IT—MORE VITAMIN C MAY FIGHT CATARACTS**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4—Epidemiological studies by U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists and others have previously found evidence that a higher intake of vitamin C helps protect against developing cataracts.

Now, the findings are more compelling because of direct evidence that higher intakes of this antioxidant vitamin lead to higher levels both in the lens of the eye, where cataracts develop, and in the fluid that nourishes the lens.

Forty-two patients scheduled for removal of cataract-clouded lenses



agreed to participate in the USDA study, reported in the August issue of Current Eye Research. Half of them got an extra two grams of vitamin C (ascorbic acid) for a few weeks before surgery, while the other half got a placebo.

“We saw significant differences between the two groups in the amount of ascorbic acid in their blood plasma, lenses, and aqueous humor fluid,” said Allen Taylor. He directs studies on relationships between nutrition and vision at the Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts in Boston. The Center is funded by USDA’s Agricultural Research Service.

Taylor said that the group receiving extra vitamin C averaged 49 percent more ascorbic acid in their lenses than did the group receiving the placebo, as well as 32 percent more in the aqueous humor fluid, which bathes and nourishes the lens. And the level of vitamin C in their blood plasma was at least 89 percent higher than in the placebo group.

His team collaborated with ophthalmologist Daniel Nadler and Sewickley Valley Hospital near Pittsburgh, Pa., which supplied the eye tissues.

However, Taylor doesn’t recommend that people start taking two grams of vitamin C a day to prevent cataracts. “We don’t know what dose might be effective over the long term,” he said. The two-gram dose was used to maximize effects over the few weeks volunteers took the vitamin. Cataracts form when lens proteins damaged by sunlight and oxygen build up and cloud the lens, reducing light transmission, said Taylor. Earlier studies with animal models by his team and others have shown that vitamin C reduces the damage.

Taylor said the differences in ascorbic acid content were surprising in view of the fact that the placebo group got an average 148 milligrams of vitamin C per day—nearly two and a half times the Recommended Dietary Allowance—through their diets.

Apparently, this intake did not provide maximal levels in the lens and aqueous humor or the levels would not have increased in the supplemented group, he said. Ascorbic acid is many times more concentrated in these tissues than in blood plasma, which means they actively take the vitamin from the blood.

Since old, clouded lenses are known to have lower vitamin C levels than young or healthy lenses, the extra vitamin C may be important, he said. His group is working to determine if it’s necessary to saturate the lens with ascorbic acid to get optimal protection.

He said the study shows for the first time that eye lens and aqueous humor levels of vitamin C are related to people's dietary intake. And it emphasizes the need to learn how increasing either vitamin C intake or plasma levels may protect people against cataracts.

It also begins to answer the question of whether plasma levels of vitamin C can be used to predict eye lens or aqueous humor levels of the vitamin, he said.

Judy McBride (301) 344-4095

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## VIDEOTAPE ON WETLANDS AVAILABLE

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4—A 23-minute videotape that shows farmers the advantages of wetlands on a farm is now available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service.

"The Wealth in Wetlands" features interviews with farmers from California, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota and New York.

The video, narrated by actor Leslie Nielsen, shows wetland restoration techniques and provides sources of help for wetland restoration and conservation.

Videotape sponsors are SCS, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), Successful Farming magazine, Ducks Unlimited Inc., the U.S. Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Copies are available for loan from local offices of SCS and the other sponsors. The 1/2-inch VHS tape may also be purchased for \$10, or borrowed for \$5, from NACD, P.O. Box 855, League City, Texas 77574-0855; telephone 1-800-825-5547.

Chris Larson (202) 447-3608

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